

ABSTRACT

A method and system for detecting copy fraud using a unique character string, e.g., a tracking ID, is provided. This tracking ID can be associated with a postage indicium and digitally signed to provide for a self-validating unique postage indicium. The self-validating postage indicium can then be applied to a mail piece, e.g., a package, which are then processed through a postal authority, e.g., the USPS. Once validated by the postal authority, the tracking ID within the unique postage indicium can be compared to the tracking ID's in all other postage indicia to ensure that tracking ID is indeed unique and has not been duplicated. If the self-validating postage indicia on tracked mail pieces are only spot-checked, the tracking ID obtained from the validated postage indicium can be compared to a standard tracking ID found elsewhere on the mail pieces. These standard tracking ID's are typically scanned 100% of the time, and thus any copyist that duplicates the postage indicium would not be able to correspondingly copy the standard tracking ID's without detection of duplicated tracking ID's or at least a tracking ID that is outside a normal range of tracking ID's as a result of the normal scanning process that the postal authority implements to keep track of mail pieces (typically packages). Thus, a comparison between the tracking ID found in the self-validating postage indicium and the standard tracking ID would reveal a discrepancy and thus possible fraud.